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ABSTRACT

The speech communication discipline is an excellent base for public relations education. Public relations is the communication of information or persuasive messages designed to integrate or adapt social institutions to the needs of people. Common functional categories of public relations activity run through virtually all public relations efforts. Most of these stress communication skills, falling into one of two recurring divisions: communication policy decisions or communication activity. Generally, public relations educaton takes place in journalism or mass communication departments of liberal arts colleges, communication departments, or management or marketing departments of business schools. Today the trend is away from journalism toward interdisciplinary programs emphasizing a broad-based social science orientation. A program based on a speech communication curriculum but drawing from 10 different disciplines and employing a public relations internship could give public relations students the functional, structural, and perceptual skills they need to be successful practitioners. (Tables of skills and the proposed curriculum are included.) (JL)

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PUBLIC RELATIONS: A SPEECH COMMUNICATION MAP OF THE TERRITORY

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PUBLIC RELATIONS: A SPEECH COMMUNICATION MAP OF THE TERRITORY

The notion that the American society with its vast array of social, economic and political organizations and institutions turns on information and effective communication is hardly new. In fact, the role of communication and the need for reliable intelligence or information is so pivotal that the survival of social components often hangs in the balance. Those who characterize the contemporary scene as the "information society," "global village" and "wired nation" recognize the complexities and interrelationships among social organizations and the role of communication in the processes of a dynamic and changing civilization.

The implications of this view for the future are profound. Toffler, in an extraordinary work (1981), suggested that virtually every aspect of human organization and endeavor would be touched by the great "wave of change" brought on by technological achievement and the information explosion. Clearly, the managment of communication and information is necessary if institutions and organizations are to survive the upheaval, stress and change that characterize their social relationships and environment. I believe that public relations is a "third wave" (Toffler, 1981) communication function for human organizations; a function designed to enable one societal component to effectively coexist with a wide variety of others.

The purpose of this paper is to develop the idea that the speech communication discipline is an excellent base for public relations education. The first section of the paper deals with the definition and conceptualization of the public relations function, the contexts where organized public relations is generally carried out, functional categories of public relations activities and the approaches to public relations education. The second section provides

a speech communication map for the preparation of the professional communicator.

Public Relations: The Territory

The Problem of Definition

The problem of achieving a consensus definition of public relations has long plagued professionals and educators. As early as 1957, during a period of remarkable growth in public relations, historian Robert Heilbroner was able to characterize the field as "a brotherhood of some 100,000, whose common bond is its profession and whose common woe is that no two of them can ever quite agree on what that profession is" (Seitel, 1980, 6). Contemporary conceptualizations of the public relations function, however, reflect a substantial convergence on a relatively few prominent, defining characteristics and features.

Edward Bernays, generally credited with teaching the first college public relations course in 1923, stressed three defining characteristics: "(1) information given to the public, (2) persuasion directed at the public to modify attitudes and actions, and (3) efforts to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its publics and of publics with that institution" (Bernays, 1952, 3). That is, public relations is defined by (1) the communication of information and (2) persuasive messages designed to (3) integrate or adapt social insitutions to the needs of people. The third feature, of course, suggests strongly that public relations is tied to the policy decisions regarding organizational behavior and, consequently, is viewed as a function of management.

Subsequent definitions have either emphasized one or more of Bernays' de-

fining characteristics or added further refinements. Marston (1979), for example, emphasized Bernays' (1952) first two features by defining public relations as the "planned, persuasive communication designed to influence significant publics" (3). Definitions offered by Nolte (1979), the Public Relations Society of America's Task Force on Stature and Role of Public Relations (Lesly, 1981) and Crable and Vibbert (in press) emphasized the mutual adaptation feature.

The majority of contemporary definitions, however, stress all three features delineated by Bernays (1952). Public relations texts written by Aronoff and Baskin (1983), Cutlip and Center (1982), Moore and Canfield (1977), Newsome and Scott (1981), Reilly (1981) and Simon (1980) define public relations in terms of communication policy and communication activity (i.e., dissemination of information and persuasion to relevant publics) while widening the scope and goals of the field. Moore and Canfield (1977), for example, suggested that "public relations is a social philosophy of management expressed in policies and practices, which, through sensitive interpretation of events based upon twoway communication with its publics, strives to secure mutual understanding and goodwill" (5-6). Cutlip and Center (1982) included good character and responsible performance as features. Aronoff and Baskin (1983), the most recent text available, explained public relations as:

> . . . a management function that helps to define organizational objectives and philosophy and facilitate organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics in the effort to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. Public relations practitioners develop, execute and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among organizations' constituent parts and publics (9).

Clearly, all of the above definitions converge on the same defining charac-

teristics of public relations: (1) communication behavior, (2) communication policy management and (3) integration and adapting of societal components.

The most comprehensive definition for public relations was suggested by Harlow (1976), who literally took all available definitions and constructed a composite working definition for the field. According to Harlow (1976),

> Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (37).

It seems to me that such a description defines the type of communicator required for organizational survival in Toffler's (1981) third wave environment.

How, then, can the speech communication discipline conceptualize the public relations function within this perspective? Clearly, the public relations practitioner is a communicator--one versed in all the available means and modes of communication. It is equally clear that the function impacts on the policy, personality (Olins, 1978), and culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) of human organizations as a result of its communication activity or inactivity. For the purposes of this paper, public relations is conceived of as the design, execution, management and evaluation of an organization's communication policies and behaviors directed to all internal and external publics.

Public Relations Contexts

Virtually every human and human organization must be able to effectively relate to those in their respective environments if they are to coexist successfully. The dominant user of public relations is the business sector.

More than 48% of the respondents in a survey of the membership of the International Association of Business Communicators worked for a company (Baker, 1981). Sizeable numbers of practitioners work for trade associations, professional societies, hospitals, schools and colleges, financial institutions, labor unions, nonprofit agencies, governments and counseling agencies.

The nature of the organization determines, in large part, the policies, procedures and publics of importance. Public relations texts usually segment the relevant publics by the type of relationships most frequently encountered in practice. Table 1 lists the most common types of publics addressed in pub-

Table 1. Primary Relationships Identified and Described in Seven Popular Public Relations Texts

	A&B	C&C	M	M&C	N	R	S
Employee Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Consumer Relations	X	X	X	X	X		X
Financial Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Media Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Supplier/Dealer Relations			X	X	X		
Competitor Relations		X			X		
Government Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Educator Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Association Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Not-for-profit Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	
International Relations	X	X	X	X	X	X	

lic relations texts by Aronoff and Baskin (1983), Cutlip and Center (1982), Marston (1979), Moore and Canfield (1977), Nolte (1979), Reilly (1981) and Seitel (1980).

The area of employee relations, for example, can focus on such concerns of the organization as (1) employee motivation, morale, alienation and personnel policies, (2) productivity and absenteeism, (3) work settings and environments, (4) employee publications, (5) management leadership, (6) training programs, (7) labor-management issues and (8) organizational culture. Each of the other major sets of relationships have an equally large range of concerns, practices and policy decisions.

It should be obvious that the public relations practitioner needs a thorough and ecclectic grounding in the social sciences if he/she is to be proficient. Lloyd (1978) identified the functional, structural and perceptual skills required for the various interpersonal, informational and decisional relationships that practitioners encounter. Functional skills are related to the professional and technical skills needed for effective job performance such as newswriting, speechwriting and graphics. Structural skills are related to planning, organizing and controlling the organization. Perceptual skills are related to information processing, interpretation, dissemination, listening and intelligence gathering. All three types of skills are required if the public relations professional is to effectively and optimally relate information to and execute policy directed toward members of the various internal and external publics.

The contexts for public relations are varied and many. However, there are common functional categories of activity that run through virtually all public relations efforts. A clear understanding of those functional categories

substantiates the conclusion that public relations practitioners are first and foremost communicators.

Functional Categories of Activity

Table 2 displays the results of a 1979 survey regarding the on-the-job duties performed by the membership of the International Association of Business Communicators (Charlton, 1979). All activities listed in the table fit

Table 2. Functional Categories of Public Relations Activity

Function	Percent Involved
Writing and editing publication	93%
Producing manuals, brochures, handbooks	76%
Interpersonal communication	75%
Managing others	73%
Counseling management	72%
Photography	72%
Preparing news releases	72%
Conducting special events	70%
Research and surveys	64%
Audio-visual projects	63%
Bulletin boards, exhibits	61%
Feedback programs	60%
Financial reports	57%
Speech writing	56%

well within the eight major job classifications of public relations work that

were developed by the Public Relations Society of America (Cutlip & Center, 1982): (1) writing, (2) editing, (3) placement of organizational messages, (4) promotion, (5) public speaking, (6) production of publications, (7) establishing policy and strategy and (8) insitutional advertising.

Other prominent activities include research and gathering intelligence, representing the organization to relevant publics, interpreting the organization and its objectives to governmental bodies and the electorate in matters of public policy, and training effective spokespersons for the organization. Again, the categories of activity fall into one of two recurring divisions: communication policy decisions or communication activity.

Approaches to Public Relations Education

In general, public relations education is administered in one of three ways. In 1981, almost half (49.5%) of the public relations programs in the United States were housed in a journalism or mass communication department usually contained in the arts and sciences college (Walker, 1981). About one in five (18.4%) programs were within communication departments that have an emphasis on organizational, interpersonal and speech communication. Only 13.4% of the programs were located in management or marketing departments in business schools.

These data reveal a trend away from journalism's omnipresence in public relations curricula toward a stronger, more responsive program with interdisciplinary currents (Walker, 1981, 1982) as well as a tremendous increase in numbers of undergraduate student majors (Petersen, 1982) from about 2,000 in 1970 to more than 18,000 in 1980 (Walker, 1982). The trend toward a more broad-based social science orientation seems to be the result of repeated calls for educational reform made by professional practitioners and educators. Kalupa and Allen (1982) surveyed registrants at the 1980 Public Relations

Society of America Atlanta conference to assess their evaluation of contemporary educational efforts. Over half of the sample (52%) believed that public relations programs were too journalistic oriented to meet the future needs of the profession. As many as 69% expressed the idea that on-the-job newspaper training will not be as important for practitioners in the coming years as it was in the past. In a companion study by the same researchers (Allen & Kalupa, 1981), an 80% agreement was found for the position that greater emphasis needs be given to social science research techniques in the education of future practitioners. Not surprisingly, 95% agreed that public relations students should take more business courses than presently required. Data show that public relations majors misunderstand economics and the free enterprise system. For example, public relations majors estimated that the average after-tax corporate profit on a one dollar sale was 31.7 cents; 26.9 cents higher than the actual 4.8 cents national average (Piland, 1982). Additional academic preparation is, indeed, needed.

The February, 1982 issue of Public Relations Journal was devoted to the education and placement of public relations practitioners. Professionals from the corporate, health-care and nonprofit, and association public relations areas called for a broad based academic curriculum (Smith, 1982b) that leads to the production of specialists in identifying social and economic trends (Willix, 1982) who are firmly grounded in the social sciences (Geyser, 1981; Jackson, 1982; Morrissey, 1982; Wyllie, 1982). The general position maintained by the practitioners was probably best expressed by Vance (1982):

> What needs to be done, however, is to restructure existing programs so that good and proper measures of speech courses, business

courses, behavioral statistics courses, economics and other pertinent social science courses are mandatory (26).

While public relations majors in journalism programs get an adequate dose of functional print skills education they often suffer because their educational career did not expose them to the requisite structural and perceptual skills (Lloyd, 1978) needed for optimal performance, policy administration and management.

Business schools have been less than receptive to the development of public relations programs (Smith, 1982a). Apparently, the reluctance to construct a public relations program in business (King, 1982; Wright, 1982) is based on arguments similar to those used by opponents in speech communication (e.g., Ellis, 1982). The consensus of opinion, however, suggests that business programs do not adequately provide the technical and professional communication skills that are so important to the practice.

Trent and Trent (1976, 1982) strongly argued that the speech communication discipline could provide an excellent base for public relations education. They correctly observed that speech communication students receive (1) a solid liberal education, (2) a broad and scientific knowledge of individual and group human communication behavior and transactions, (3) exposure to research methodologies useful in public relations, (4) coursework in persuasion and social influence and (5) an understanding of public opinion. It was Trent and Trent's (1976) conviction that ". . . academic preparation for public relations can and should be centered in speech communication departments which can provide the broad theoretical and practical base needed by contemporary practitioners" (296).

The curriculum suggested by Trent and Trent (1976) was dominated by tra-

ditional speech communication courses with minor support from coursework in mass media and journalism. The Trents' (1982) later paper revised the plan-of-study to include a course in research methods as well as exposure to computer technology and statistics. The resulting curriculum was a step in the right direction. What remains to be done is to finalize a public relations curriculum that provides an education that:

> . . . shall put aside its separatist disciplines and unite on a common ground of the communication arts and sciences, both professional and liberal in scope; that education shall endeavor to train the whole person, both as practitioner and thinker; that education shall provide a marriage of theory and practice with the chief beneficiary being the offspring, the graduate product of the academy; and that education shall teach an adaptability to and an understanding of this changing human condition. (Lloyd, 1978, 364).

The next section of this paper develops such a curriculum.

A Speech Communication Map

It was argued earlier in this paper that successful and optimal performance in public relations was contingent upon three sets of skills. More specifically, functional skills include all the professional and technical skills necessary for the communication of the social component's messages; structural skills include the cognitive skills related to planning and organizing as well as to the ways control is exerted on the social organization; and perceptual skills include information gathering, interpretation and processing as well as diffusion or dissemination, learning and listening. Appropriate coursework in generally available academic units are specified for each skill area below. Courses marked by an asterisk are usually in a combined speech communication/radio-television program.

Functional Skills

Newswriting and Reporting (Basic communication techniques with emphasis given to news value, reporting, writing, grammar, style, consumer interest and readability. Practical assignments in print and electronic formats)

Copy Editing and Make-up (A practical course in the selection and preparation of written and pictorial materials for newspapers, magazines and related media)

Graphics (A study of printing processes, typography, photoengraving, layout and design, production planning and related topics)

Advanced Public Relations Writing (A course in the planning and production of special pages and sections of house organs, financial reports and related writings. Consideration is also given to legal and ethical problems and to the effects of technological developments on staff organization, production and graphic design)

Writing for Radio and Television (Introduction to broadcast regulation, promotional copy, public service announcements. Consideration is given to ratings, program selection, syndication markets, public broadcasting stations, cable services and subscription television in the preparation of assignments)*

Introduction to Mass Media Technology (Basic course designed to expose the student to the tools and basic concepts of media production--print and electronic)*

Sound/Video Production (An introduction to the fundamentals and techniques of sound and video production. Actual production work is involved)*

Essentials of Public Speaking*

Advanced Public Speaking (Specific study of speech structure, theme and style with an emphasis on speechwriting)*

Structural Skills

Essentials of Interpersonal Communication*

Small Group Communication*

Organizational Communication*

Communication and Conflict Management (Exposure to theoretical, practical and pragmatic aspects of conflict management at the dyadic, small group, organizational and societal levels. Emphasis is given to communication strategies)*

Contemporary Theories of Communication (An analysis of the communication process as a complex transaction between social entities operating in a dynamic environment)*

Introduction to Management (Introductory course in contemporary systems of managing organizations as well as exposure to the unique language of managers)

Social Aspects of Industry (The sociology of work relationships in various settings complemented by study of aspects of the general relationship between and interdependencies of societal components)

Introduction to Public Relations (Basic theory course focusing on public relations as a profession of applied communication. Analysis of public relations in its place, purpose, processes, tools and many publics to which it applies. Consideration is given to public relations history, principles and practices as well as ethical and professional issues)

Advanced Public Relations (Case study approach to the operation and objectives of public relations programs in corporate, educational, governmental and similar contexts. Emphasis is given to relating the management functions of decision making and policy formulation to the communication process)

Perceptual Skills

Introduction to Communication Research (Examination of contemporary communication research methods. Emphasis is given to questionnaire/survey construction, psychometric measurement, research design and related topics)*

Persuasion (Study of communication designed to change attitudes, beliefs and/or behavior. Emphasis is given to campaign strategies and major variables that impact on persuasive effect)*

Mass Media and Society (A consideration of the social, political and economic effects of the mass media through an historical survey of the mass communication industry with the analysis of the interrelationship of the media to each other and society)*

Mass Media Law and Regulations (Study of the policy making process, regulatory agencies and their impact on American media)*

Principals of Marketing (Consideration of product development, promotion, pricing, distribution, image/identity, and determining marketing objectives and available markets)

Advertising (Advertising as a tool in marketing. Emphasis is given to media selection, budgeting, production, layout and measurement of effectiveness. Attention also to the social economic aspects of advertising)

Social Psychology (Theories and research findings in areas such as social behavior, socialization, language and communication, attitudes and group processes)

Population and Demography (Population theory, migration, characteristics, vital rates, growth and policies. Emphasis is given to public opinion)

Statistics

Skills Integration

An additional course, Public Relations Internship, provides actual hands on experience as an intern with a public relations department of agency. The experience, generally late in the student's academic career, is designed to integrate the functional, structural and perceptual skills for entry into the profession.

Curriculum Summary

The plan-of-study outlined above draws courses from ten different disciplines: speech communication, mass communication, sociology, journalism, statistics, art, psychology, marketing, management and public relations. The student would supplement this coursework by meeting the college's general education requirement by taking prescribed courses in English, the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, civilization or history and foreign language.

One final implication seems clear. The demands placed on public relations practitioners may require a complete reassessment of the traditional four-year program. It might be that a five year or six year term may be needed if public relations education is to provide American societal components with the third wave communicators that will surely need.

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